

### **Abstract of the Disclosure**

A process gas and a process of laser machining, such as laser beam fusion cutting or laser beam welding is provided. A gas mixture that contains at least oxygen and hydrogen, in addition to an inert gas, is used as the process gas. The ratio of oxygen to hydrogen in the process gas is hypostoichiometric with respect to the reaction  $2 \text{H}_2 + \text{O}_2 \rightarrow 2 \text{H}_2\text{O}$ , which causes the process gas to exhibit a reductive effect.

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Reply to Office Action of 02/13/2004

**Amendments to the Abstract:**

Please add the Abstract of the Disclosure submitted herewith on a separate page.